

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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R 280950Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1320

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BDIS, TH

SUBJ: PROPOSED LEVIES ON FOREIGN FILMS

REF: STATE 178184

1. ON JULY 23, EMBOFF SPOKE WITH MR. WILLIAM BLAMEY, THAILAND MANAGER OF TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX AND COLUMBIA FILMS, ABOUT THE PROPOSED BILL WHICH INTER ALIA WOULD ALLEGEDLY PLACE AN IMPORT QUOTA ON FOREIGN FILMS AND INCREASE THE DUTY ON THEIR IMPORT.

2. ACCORDING TO BLAMEY, THIS BILL WAS PROPOSED BY DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERIOR, SAMAK SUNTHARAWET, ACTING ON BEHALF OF THE THAI MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY, BUT THAT IT RECENTLY WAS WITHDRAWN AS A RESULT OF OPPOSITION MAINLY FROM THE MOVIE HOUSES WHICH FEARED A DRASTIC REDUCTION IN ATTENDANCE IF THE IMPORT OF FOREIGN FILMS WERE REDUCED. HE SAID HE HAS REPORTED THIS TO THE MOTION PICTURE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA.

3. BLAMEY ATTEMPTING TO OBTAIN A COPY OF THIS DRAFT LEGISLATION AND WILL PROVIDE THE EMBASSY A COPY IF HE IS SUCCESSFUL. HE ALSO PROMISED TO KEEP THE EMBASSY INFORMED IF THERE IS FURTHER MOVEMENT TO REINTRODUCE THE BILL. THE EMBASSY, IN ITS SEPARATE ATTEMPTS TO OBTAIN COPY OF DRAFT LEGISLATION, HAS BEEN INFORMED THAT A BILL DEALING WITH MOTION PICTURE FILM IMPORTS HAS BEEN INTRODUCED BY MP SONGSUK PHAKKASEM (DEM. FROM CHIANG MAI). THE SPEAKER

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OF THE HOUSE HAS ALLEGEDLY PLACED IT ON THE AGENDA FOR

SOME TIME NEXT WEEK. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THIS IS A SEPARATE BILL FROM THE ONE MENTIONED ABOVE. WE HOPE TO OBTAIN COPY OF THIS DRAFT LEGISLATION SHORTLY.

4. AS A RELATED DEVELOPMENT, AN ARTICLE IN THE JULY 23 EDITION OF A THAI LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER STATED THAT THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE HAD DECIDED TO ISSUE AN EXECUTIVE DECREE TO RAISE THE IMPORT DUTY ON FOREIGN FILMS FROM APPROXIMATELY US \$500 TO US\$5,000 PER PRINT. UPON CHECKING WITH THE MINISTRY, EMBASSY LEARNED THAT AT THIS MONTH'S MEETING OF THE TARIFF COMMITTEE (CHAIRMANED BY THE UNDER SECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE) THIS SUBJECT WAS DISCUSSED BUT NO DECISION REACHED. THIS SUBJECT IS TO BE TAKEN UP AGAIN DURING THE AUGUST COMMITTEE MEETING.

5. TO ATTEMPT TO FORESTALL AN ADVERSE DECISION, EMBASSY MET WITH THREE IMPORTERS OF U.S. FILMS (BLAMEY, BOON TUN-RAKOMAN OF WARNER BROTHERS AND CHANA CHARKYKARANA OF CINEMA INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION) ON JULY 26 TO FORMULATE PLANS. THESE MEN, WHO HOPE TO BE JOINED BY IMPORTERS OF NON-AMERICAN FILMS, WILL DRAW UP A PETITION ADDRESSED TO THE MINISTER OF FINANCE LISTING THE REASONS WHY SUCH AN ACTION WOULD BE HARMFUL TO THAILAND, E.E., LOSS OF TAX REVENUE, ETC. AT THAT TIME EMBASSY WILL RENDER APPROPRIATE SUPPORT.

6. WILL KEEP DEPARTMENT INFORMED.
WHITEHOUSE

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